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THE MATHEMATICS TEACHER

EDITED BY
W. H. METZLER

ASSOCIATED WITH
EUGENE R. SMITH HARRY D. GAYLORD
MAURICE J. BABB WILLIAM E. BRECKENRIDGE

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A Danger.

Dr. Wheelock's paper gives some very interesting statistics concerning the success of different schools in the examinations in mathematics set by the New York State Regents Department.

There is some danger however in giving too much weight to these facts and the conclusions derived from them. Every experienced teacher knows that it is possible to obtain a very high percentage of success in such examinations as these by definitely preparing the pupils for the examination, rather than working for their interests and individual needs.

It is often said that the second purpose, if the work is well done, will include the former. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the number of possible combinations of geometric principles used in an examination is necessarily limited, and a teacher who centralizes the course about previous examination questions and makes the passing of the examination the aim of teaching, may obtain a high degree of success in this, without giving the pupil any adequate training. On the other hand, the teacher who wishes to broaden the outlook of his pupils and to give to each lasting interest in such methods of thought as geometry furnishes will many times feel hampered by the necessity of reaching even the best chosen examination standard, which by its very existence, fits the norm, not the varying units.

These facts do not go to prove that ability to pass an examination is not a desirable thing, but simply that our testing systems are still far from perfect, and that the teacher should test the results of his own teaching far more strictly than can any system.